In the meantime, good luck with your continued educational endeavors. There are two points of contact at the College. Jane Turner, the Registrar, is the person who actually verifies your completion, the person that your requests go through here at the College. Questions about that process should go to Jane at DSN 655-4756 or COMM 703-805-4756. If you have any questions as to the process of working with the college/university of your choice, please call Linda Ryder, DSN 655-4705, COMM 703-805-4705.

MY ROAD TO LEADERSHIP

I'm forty-two. When I was twenty-six, I endured the supervisory equivalent of the Kobe earthquake: I had developed a research project, obtained a federal grant for support, and became the project leader. With this role came hiring and supervising a staff of 10, plus 16 consultants, and the ongoing motivation of 12 independent research sites. It was a gigantic leadership task for someone whose "supervisory" experience had involved, at the most complex level, ad hoc committee leadership. It was a challenge, but through my staff's and my own skills, the project went remarkably well. I was a whiz-kid, and my project was a marvel. Near the end of the two-year project, three disasters struck in rapid succession: First, a colleague at one of our sites committed suicide; next, a client at another site was murdered; third my project administrative assistant/secretary/bookkeeper veered off into insanity, topped off by a total nervous breakdown suffered right on the job; and as an anti-climax, the federal sponsor **RIFed** our project monitor. I felt personally responsible for each and every disaster, short of the RIF.

For the next 12 years, the idea of being in charge of anything had the same appeal as a root canal.

In my late 30's, as a consequence of USAREUR'S **free-fall** (otherwise know as controlled drawdown), I asked to take over a staff. I viewed this request in the same manner as the weenie who leads the wagon train across the desert after the Indians have massacred all senior leadership: It was me or nobody. The prior leader, a charismatic, brilliant man, had died after an extensive, debilitating illness, and the staff was in disarray. But I took it on and excelled. I filled vacancies, rebuilt or invented methods and system documentation, smoothed tempers, and rebuilt a team. After a year, just as my wagon train was pulling into Santa Fe, 1 was recruited for another supervisory position and promoted to GM-14.

Something obviously happened between ages 28 and 40. What?

First, role models. I worked for several brilliant leaders-- individuals whose steady, positive, clear-sighted leadership styles have served as beacons piercing the dark for me. Equally helpful, I worked for some poor supervisors--supervisors who cheated on their wives with the junior staff, drank too much at office parties, viciously berated their staffs with regularity, ducked when the difficult choices had to be made, and were simply incapable of leading through lack of subject matter expertise. I gradually saw that even I, leader of the Dormer Pass of research projects, could do much better than my poor role models.

Second, time healed. I came to softly accept my colleague's suicide, however regrettable, as her personal choice. I try not to remember my client's murder often; at the very least, I've stopped blaming myself for encouraging her to pursue legal avenues against her assailant who did what he threatened which was to break out of jail, track her down, and kill her. I finally realized my assistant's madness was her own, and her breakdown long overdue. In fact, collapsing on my time was a perverse compliment: She knew I would take care of her, which probably no prior supervisor would have done. I even allowed myself to feel some of the real undeniable anger at the confusion and grief she caused my staff and myself in the hectic final months of the project. The anguish has subsided, and now even the anger is gone.

Third, I aged. I'm now the same age as my best role models were when I first worked for them. In my list of good leader characteristics, I found myself listing "**inwardly** motivated" as a key positive trait. The leaders I have admired seemed, from my junior perspective, to move forward without steam. Now, I'm pretty sure they got some external assistance from time to time, but when you're a kid, Dad's sooooo big, you know? Now I'm

Dad. Recently, my PC crashed, taking a week's worth of programs with it that had to be painstakingly recreated. A junior member of my staff was with me at the time, and I recall staring at the dead screen and thinking, "I can't look upset! Not in front of the **children!"** After recovering all files, I bumped into a colleague who pleasantly asked how things were going. So I told him about the PC crash. I unburdened myself. I shared. He offered a bit of good natured, good humored consolation ("oooooh..bummer. "). And you know what ? IT DIDN'T HELP WORTH A DAMN. It would not have helped my role mentors either. I'm going back to my list of good leader characteristics, cross through "inwardly motivated" and write "fakes inward motivation well." I take comfort imagining the great leaders of time faking it: Napoleon, Moses, Lincoln, Joan of Arc. My own Dad: **soooo** big, some days moving forward without steam, and some days faking it, at least until the steam came back on.

Fourth, in aging, I (thankfully) matured. I've had experiences that one cannot escape from. By consequence, I've learned to sit and take it. In my late 20's I was indeed a "whiz kid," with a strong emphasis on "kid." I had not yet experienced the chronic illness of friends and parents; I had not yet seen someone die; I had not yet given birth. There is something about these experiences that gives one a measure of consistency and sticking power. In graduate school, we did a class exercise that was graded solely on the participation of the individuals. If someone tuned out, sighed and gave up, or mentally checked out, we lost points. It's what I teach and model with my staff: You cannot ride without peddling, We will not get from here to there without everyone's efforts. If you check out for a moment, be sure to check back in.

At this point, I'm considered a very capable supervisor. Even visionary. My staff is loyal and well motivated. We perform well and attract **taskers** that other divisions have failed. In a drawdown that has left a wasteland where well-groomed professional gardens once bloomed, I have been extended year after year. I've even been promoted. By these objective criteria, I must be doing something good.

How I do this is mostly understood and yet partly a mystery to me. Like my role models, I am generally even tempered. I am able to work very long hours for extensive periods without getting disheartened or losing perspective. I genuinely care about my staff. I am

technically proficient and demand a technically proficient staff through training and recruitment. I enjoy my work, and that genuine enjoyment carries over to the staff.

But I'm also less organized than I wish to be. I will happily waddle in data and details, when I should pull back responsibly and see the big picture. I worry that my concern for my staff doesn't come across to them. I worry about my inability to structure our work and processes so as to reduce overtime and crash periods. I want to institute stress reduction and health maintenance. I want to do 360 degree evaluations, and instead I'm late submitting all TAPES objectives. I worry that I'm just a "junior 14" and hope that I'll grow into my own shoes eventually, even while my supervisor talks about growing at 15.

But, for better or worse, at least I'm an open book. There is less and less of me that is obvious to everyone but myself. There are few secrets I fear will leak out and become evident to someone else. The AMSC tests and feedback bear this out: I scored the same, extreme **"INTJ"** on the Myers-Briggs as I have scored several times over the years. Feedback during the first week at AMSC confirmed a high degree of congruency between how I see myself, and how I am seen by supervisors, peers, and subordinates (fortunately, the congruency was one positive trait). I like that. I've pushed a good deal of me into the open quadrant. Consistent with these test results, I scored high on the **Blanchard** Leader Behavior Analysis 11 instrument scales for flexibility as well as effectiveness; my primary style is "high directive, high supportive behavior," while my secondary style is "high supportive, low directive behavior." (It helps to have selected a good staff--I do not have to kick butt and take names often! But just in case I do, my developing style is "high directive, low supportive behavior.") And given my **Myers-Briggs,** it is no surprise that when I erred on the **Blanchard** LBA, it was because I selected behavioral responses that were overly directive.

This is where I'm headed: Letting go. Empowering the staff rather than directing or coaching. Setting up systems and processes; scouting out the future; and trusting that a well trained, well motivated staff will respond positively when the target and map are clear. There will come a day when my staff knows more than me, and that's alright. In fact, it's what they are paid to do. I'm the grown-up my Dad was, and perhaps even the grown-up my Dad never was.

Devorah Waesch
Nonresident Class 1995